

Dental Medicine in Rijeka up Until the Founding of Study of Dentistry

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Summary

The introduction refers to the importance of knowledge of historical events in order to evaluate objectively and critically certain time periods.

A short review is given of dental medicine between the two world wars in relation to dental practice and education of dentists in Croatia.

On the basis of preserved documents and other sources a chronological review is given of events leading to the founding and commencement of study at the Medical Faculty in Rijeka, from 1959 up until 1973. Important arguments and motives are also given which support the opening of Study of Dentistry in Rijeka.

Key words: *history of dental medicine, Study of Dentistry in Rijeka.*

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Introduction

Knowledge of the past with regard to certain events, such as for example the 30th anniversary of the founding of Study of Dentistry at the Medical Faculty in Rijeka, help us to objectively and critically evaluate certain events in the past which occurred in the education of dentists in Croatia.

As early as Roman times thoughts on the importance and knowledge of historical events were evident. Thus the eminent orator and philosopher CICERON (Marko Tulije ←106 to ←43) wisely pronounced that *"history is the teacher of life"* (*Historia magistra vitae est*) (1-3). With this he wished to stress the values offered by numerous experiences and lessons from the past.

In the middle of the 17th century the German philosopher, historian and mathematician, LEIBNIZ (1646-1716), who was also the founder of the Ger-

man Academy of Science, announced to his contemporaries new and productive thoughts on historical connection between the past, present and future (3).

The philosophers and thinkers VOLTAIRE (1694-1778) and KANT (1724-1804) (3) also considered that history is not only a series of events which follow one after the other, but rather they follow one from the other.

Such perception prompted me, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Study of Dentistry, to review the chronology of events preceding the enrolment of students in Study of Dentistry in 1973.

Dental medicine between the two world wars

During the period between the two world wars it was not possible to study dental medicine at the Medical Faculty in Zagreb. At that time dentistry

was practised by general practitioners after completing postgraduate study, various specialist courses or after working for a specific period in foreign clinics, particularly in Vienna, Graz, Prague, Budapest, Padova, Bologna, or elsewhere abroad. Such physicians/specialists in oral diseases most often performed dental practise in large towns, while other dentists practised in small villages and towns throughout Croatia.

At that time the number of physicians-specialists in oral diseases was insufficient for even the most basic requirements for dental care of the population, and therefore in 1927 the Law on Health (4) was passed by which dentists-technicians were allowed to work in the mouths of patients. They needed, however, to satisfy the condition that they had worked for 10 years in a dental-technical laboratory and had obtained confirmation from a physician-dentist that they had helped in the dental surgery during clinical treatment of patients. They were then granted a licence to take the state examination, which they were required to successfully pass before a special committee, named by the Ministry.

During the first half of the 20th century dental service in Croatia was characterised by dental-technical practise. In this period treatment and replacement of lost teeth was closely connected with technical methods of work, and it was therefore considered that the work was more technical skill than medical work (5). Not until 1936 was the definition of dental medicine passed at the IX Congress of the International Dental Federation (FDI - Federation dentaire internationale) (7). Thus it was decided that it is a branch of medicine and that the scope of its work is prevention, treatment and oral rehabilitation. Subsequently the tendency towards change from dental-technical to dental medicine was even more emphasised.

Education of the dentist after 1945

At the end of the Second World War there were dental high schools in Split and Zagreb which ceased work in 1948, when teaching of dental medicine commenced at the Medical Faculty in Zagreb. It should be emphasised that for a long time dualism existed between dentists, who carried out the pro-

fession ("as a trade") and doctors of dental medicine, who adopted a biological-medical approach in their professional methods and procedures. In those days, apart from dental diseases, increasing attention was paid to the improvement and maintenance of oral health, and the concept of dental protection of the whole population, with special attention to children, young people and old people.

Study of Dentistry in Rijeka

On the basis of preserved documents (6) and other sources (8-10) we will present a chronological review of events which preceded the founding and commencement of Study of Dentistry at the Medical Faculty in Rijeka, from 1959 up until 1973.

After work ceased in the dental high schools of Split and Zagreb a total number of 70 students graduated in the study of dental medicine at the Medical School in Zagreb up until 1959, which was not sufficient to enable dental care for the whole of the population of Croatia.

Consequently, the possibility of starting Study of Dentistry at the Medical Faculty in Rijeka was considered, and in 1959/60 talks were held between the Dean of the Medical Faculty in Rijeka, Prof. Karlo Pansini, a representative of the School of Dental Medicine in Zagreb, Prof. Miroslav Suvin, and a representative of the Public Health Institute within the Health Centre in Rijeka, Dr. Juraj Hraste, and a representative of the NO (Peoples Board) County of Rijeka. After the talks a proposal for the structure of the Dental Department of the Medical Faculty in Rijeka was put forward by the Dean, Prof. Živko Bolf and Prof. Miroslav Suvin and Prof. Zdenko Njemirovskij, as the teachers with the greatest amount of theoretical and practical teaching, according to the teaching plan and programme. However the opening of the Department of Dental Medicine at the Medical Faculty in Rijeka did not take place because the condition that the Clinic for Maxillofacial and Oral Surgery should be opened at the same time in the Clinical Hospital Centre in Rijeka was not possible.

In February 1961 the Council of the School of Medicine in Zagreb passed a decision on the formation of a Committee for founding an independent Dental School in Zagreb, and also a proposal to

found a Higher dental school in Rijeka, Osijek and Split, where study would last for two academic years (six semesters), in order to at least temporarily satisfy the most basic requirements for health personnel in Croatian dental medicine. After production of the necessary elaborate on 6 October 1961 the Higher Dental School in Rijeka was founded according to the resolution of NO (Peoples Board) Rijeka, and confirmed by an act of the Executive Council of Parliament on 16 November 1961.

At that time, according to data from the Public Health Institute, there was a shortage of 700-800 dentists in Croatia, and the ratio of inhabitants to one dentist was very unfavourable. For example, in the town of Rijeka the ratio was 1:3,049, in the County of Rijeka 1:4,808 and in Pula 1:6,428 inhabitants. According to epidemiological data at the same time the prevalence of persons with caries was 95%, which means that only five people out of one hundred had a completely healthy set of teeth. Dental protection for children and young people was almost non-existent.

In the meantime the Department of Maxillofacial and Oral Surgery was founded in Sušak Hospital with the arrival of Prof. Radomir Tavčar. Prof. Juraj Hraste was head of the courses "Dental Morphology with an Introduction to Dental Medicine" and "Preventive and Child Dentistry" in the Public Health Institute at the Dental Polyclinic (11). Consequently the Committee for the founding of the Dentistry Department at the Medical Faculty in Rijeka proposed that the first students in the I semester could be enrolled in the autumn of 1965. The founding of the Dental Department was gradual, and the teaching plan for study in Rijeka was identical to that in the School of Dental Medicine in Zagreb, with the same number of theoretical and practical teaching, lasting for five years, i.e. X semesters.

On the 28 April 1965 the Committee for founding the Department of Dentistry at the Medical Faculty in Rijeka completed a detailed, documented elaborate of 18 pages, giving detailed reasons for the proposal. This was completely accepted by the Teachers' Council and the Council of the Medical Faculty in Rijeka. The Dean at the time was Prof. Davor Perović and President of the Council Prof. Čedomil Plavšić. The following year, on 29 June 1966, the Professional Council of the Public Health

Institute unanimously passed a conclusion of "agreement with the opening of the Department of Dentistry at the Medical Faculty on the condition that at the same time the Dental High School discontinues (the School ceased working in 1968), and that the opening of Study of Dentistry does not increase the costs of financing the school, which this year is born by the Public Health Institute".

Finally the Republican Secretariat for Education and Culture passed a resolution (27. 6. 1966) that all conditions for the enrolment of students and holding of courses at the Department of Dentistry, Medical Faculty in Rijeka were fulfilled, and on the basis of a written report by the Committee, which included Prof. Ivo Miše, Doc. Vladimir Lapter from the School of Dental Medicine in Zagreb, and Prof. Dušan Jakac from the Medical Faculty in Rijeka.

On 17 June, 1970, a basic agreement was signed between the Medical Faculty in Rijeka (Dean. Prof. Zdenko Križan) and the School of Dental Medicine in Zagreb (Dean: Prof. Ivo Miše), in which both sides agree to jointly found and organise Study of Dentistry in Rijeka. The professional Board included both Deans and the same number of teachers from both schools/faculties.

During 1972 several articles appeared in the press with numerous statements to the effect that, for example, a School of Dental Medicine was opening in Rijeka, which was not true, and that such study was not needed because it already existed in Zagreb, and also that there was an insufficient number of teachers for professional dentistry subjects etc.

In order to give the correct information, particularly to health employees, an article was published in "Liječničke novine", the official newspaper of the branch-office of the Croatian Medical Society in Rijeka, Zadar and Pula (God. II, No. 8, p 1-2). The article was headed "The truth about Study of Dentistry in Rijeka" (8). On that occasion certain obscurities were clarified, which were later used in talks and discussions (Independent faculty, Sector, Department, Study at the Medical Faculty) and also in reports in the daily press. At the same time in the aforementioned article in "Liječničke novine" reasons were put forward which supported the opening of Study of Dentistry in Rijeka, and which were substantiated by epidemiological data on dental-oral

health, the lack of dentists in Croatia, compared to comparative data from other centres and countries and also other relevant data, in order to serve the purpose of objective judgement of the social and professional need, with the aim of arriving at a final decision on the opening of Study of Dentistry in Rijeka.

For the above reasons, in order to obtain the official opinion of the Health Service, the Council of the Public Health Institute passed a decision (27. 12. 1972) in accordance with articles 71 and 72 of the Law on Health "that its units will serve as the scientific teaching base for students of medicine and dental medicine".

The following year (1973) the Dean of the Medical Faculty in Rijeka, Prof. Slobodan Ćuk, presented informative reasons to the University of Rijeka for the founding of Study of Dentistry. Finally on 22 October 1973 the Scientific Teaching Council of the Medical Faculty and the University Council in Rijeka (Dean: Prof. Zorislav Sapunar and President of the Council Prof. Davor Perović) presented their positive opinions with the explanation that there was a social need, that a sufficient number of teachers had been ensured and that material conditions existed for the commencement of teaching in the academic year 1973, at the time that the University in Rijeka was also founded.

Conclusion

Finally at the end of this report we present the most important motives and arguments which supported the opening of Study of Dentistry at the Medical Faculty, such as the following:

- The natural development and broadening of work of the Medical Faculty in Rijeka, which was founded in 1955, and up until 1973 the need for physicians and dentists had increased significantly.
- Study of Dentistry is related to the study of medicine, because out of the total number of 33 subjects, according to the teaching plan and programme 25 are relative to medical subjects and 8 to specific dentistry subjects.
- With the introduction of Study of Dentistry future students had the possibility of choosing between the study of general medicine or dentistry during enrolment at the Medical Faculty.
- A good material base and premises already existed for teaching at the Medical Faculty, hospital capacity, in the Public Health Institute at the Dental Polyclinic (the premises of the former Dental High School, with appropriate equipment for practical teaching of dentistry subjects, and little financial investment necessary for the commencement of teaching.
- With the founding of Study of Dentistry integration of health, teaching and scientific work in dentistry was achieved, which had a positive effect on the development and quality of health protection.